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ABSTRACT

The monograph provides a brief framework for exploring individual differences of the American Indian student. The individualized program of teaching and learning is designed to account for individual differences in the broadest terms. Emphasis is placed on the idea that educators must address themselves to the knotty problem of changing the educational sequence for children into one of constant challenge with each day a successful day and without a daily frustration level which tends to destroy initiative and the desire to achieve. The authors believe a successful individualized program can be developed through the cooperative effort of all those who desire to improve Indian education. The individual child must be given the opportunity to develop the skills and concepts necessary to live in a bicultural society. Teachers must be sensitive to and cognizant of ways to provide opportunities for the Indian child to identify with and feel a pride in his heritage. Four areas of consideration in designing an individualized instructional program are discussed: (1) the situation--education for the Indian child has failed because his cultural identity has been ignored; (2) the individual--the teacher must understand the setting out of which the child appears each day; (3) the involvement in curriculum development by parents, tribal leaders, educators, and curriculum designers; and (4) the program--techniques for teaching. (FF)

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INDIVIDUALIZATION OF INSTRUCTION:

THE AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENT

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by

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This publication is the seventh in a series of articles discussing the topic of Individualization of Instruction.

FOREWORD

You may have heard recently the phrase, "Now that we have achieved education for all, let us seek education for each." We certainly have nearly achieved education for all, and we have it within our power to achieve education for each, but to do so we must change markedly in the next decade and constantly examine new avenues which seem to offer realistic improvements for the teaching-learning process.

This monograph series is designed to set forth what is the most enlightened thought in the field. New ideas will be presented with the hope that some implementation will follow.

While we will not be advocating any one specific course or another, we believe it to be necessary to give currency to new and viable solutions to some of the problems that face us in today's complex world.

Educators will not find specific recipes to educational problems in this brief paper, but it is hoped that they will find meaningful and useful ideas, directions, and procedures. From this point of view, practicing educators, and others, should find the information contained in the educational monographs of considerable value and assistance. How well we accomplish our purposes will eventually be for our children to witness or censure.

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INTRODUCTION

The authors have sought, in this monograph, to provide a brief framework for exploring individual differences of the Indian learner. It is hoped that this general presentation will provide impetus for further reading to gain deeper meaning and understanding of the unique challenge in moving toward an educational program for Indian students that will be successful.

The individualized program of teaching and learning is designed to account for individual differences in the broadest terms. Educators must address themselves to the very knotty problem of changing the educational sequence for children into one of constant challenge with each day a successful day and without a daily frustration level which tends to destroy initiative and desire to achieve. The authors believe a successful program can and will be developed through the cooperative effort of all those who desire to improve Indian education.

Today we begin....tomorrow is too late. Piece-meal effort is not enough. Commitment to the task must be immediate and total from those who are responsible.

D.E.H. and L.L.B.

THE SITUATION

There appears to be a prevailing basic assumption which suggests education for American Indian students in its total spectrum, has failed, is failing and will continue to fail the majority of Indian children based on aspects of past and present curriculum offerings, static methods of instruction and the traditional use of instructional personnel and materials available in the schools serving American Indian children.

This indictment has been spelled out by Indian leaders and educators throughout the United States.

Mr. Clarence Wesley, Chairman of the San Carlos Apache Tribe in Arizona made the following statement concerning the attempt being made to educate the Indian child:

> "The handicap from which Indian children suffer most is that usually the off-reservation public school is too busy following the state adopted curriculum and meeting the needs of all the students to make the adaptions necessary to meet the needs of the non-English speaking Indian child who is already behind his group in knowledge of how to study and in comprehension. The school curriculum is geared to a whole set of concepts and literary background too often totally unfamiliar to an Indian child. Few teachers have the time. . .or know how to go back and supply that deficiency or to teach the reading skills necessary to catch up. So the Indian child becomes confused and lost, and sits unchallenged while the non-Indian part of the class moves eagerly ahead."[1]

Dealing with cultural differences and accepting them is a priority educators cannot dismiss. Walter Mondale, writing in the National Elementary Principal magazine states:

> "We must build upon cultural strengths that the child brings into the classroom. We must give that child the sense of personal identification so essential to his social maturation and so essential to his growth in learning."[2]

The teacher, as a partner with the parent, is responsible for development of the child's self-image and intellectual growth. The teacher of Indian children, if not Indian, finds himself in a world of great ethnic differences as compared to the life he has experienced. It is a world of differences in nearly all aspects of a life style that has endured extreme depredation and hardships in spite of varying degrees of acculturation into the dominant society.

Understanding these differences and adjusting the teaching to them may be essential if the teacher hopes to develop into a successful team member in the development of the Indian child.

According to Dr. John Bryde, it is generally agreed by most educators that one of the prime ends or education is to meet the needs of the children. Beyond the basic biological and human needs for love, security and personal fulfillment common to all mankind, all other needs are learned or culturally induced. Education, therefore, should also be very concerned with meeting the cultural needs of the students.[3]

If educators subscribe to this premise, they are alluding to basic cultural needs as well as educational needs by the individual. If the individual is the central concern, then we must have teachers who are sensitive to and cognizant of ways to provide opportunities for the child to identify with and feel a pride in his heritage. The individual child must be given the opportunity to develop skills and concepts necessary to live in a bi-cultural society.

The teacher holds the key to implementing the educational program for the individual learner. A positive interpersonal relationship with children under his aegis is of critical importance. An awareness of this required positive relationship could be of greater critical importance. Robert Roessel made the following observations concerning the teacher of Indian children:

> "It is important for a teacher or an administrator to know how a child feels about himself, about his school and about his friends. The way a child feels colors his approach to life. Confidence and happiness bring an interest to learning, while insecurity, rejection or a feeling of inadequacy may bring hostility or withdrawal.
>
> "A good educator must be able to make an intelligent judgement based on facts concerning the life of the Indian student. Because Indian children usually grow and mature in a culture that is different from the culture under which most educators have lived, it is of the utmost importance that teachers and administrators know facts regarding the Indians' culture, the pupils' families and the community in which they live. Only by accumulating such information can educators make valid assumptions concerning the feeling of Indian children and only then can they hope to "understand the child."[4]

It behooves the teacher of Indian children to look at the child's culture and attempt to understand the "why" of many individual actions which may seem peculiar and unorthodox. Thus, a basic responsibility of the teacher is to be knowledgeable about traditional and current differences between cultures.

Greenberg points out the need for teacher attitudinal awareness:

> "The teacher's empathy for students of all groups and awareness of cross-cultural problems, intellectually as well as emotionally costs litte. Students can accurately evaluate a teacher's sincerity and ability, and both are prerequisites for successful education."[5]

Understanding these differences will enhance the task of obtaining group and individual interest in the planning of curricula which can challenge, interest and be of use to Indian children as they perceive what is relevant and of worth, based on the values they hold.

Although each tribe has its own distinct culture and traditions, there are a number of general considerations which are conducive to a more clear understanding. Awareness should consider the general components of culture as it applies to the American Indian. Obviously there are more than the following but these can be considered as core components as stated.

Subsistence: How the particular tribe provides for its daily existence. This may have changed from the early days of reservation life and very likely a great deal of change has taken place since pre-reservation life.

Housing: Type of housing and past and present construction methods and materials. Influence of the local ecomony on housing.

Clothing: The dress represents not only practicality but also represents cultural traditions which have a great deal of ceremonial meaning.

Crafts: The arts and crafts of a tribe are normally distinctive from one tribe to another. The teacher should know and understand this fact.

Social Organizations: This is the institution that determines the positions of the individual and the group in the tribe. It is important that the teacher know about the clan system, societies, family organizations including the extended family, kinship and its intricate ramifications.

Political Systems: Understand and respect the tribal political organization and methods of selecting representatives.

Religion and Mythology: The teacher of Indian children should become familiar with dances and ceremonials. They should respect the medicine men and encourage them to help teach myths and legends to the children. The teacher should respect the right of the individual to attend and participate in important ceremonies which reflect the religion.

Language: Attempt to understand the general organization of the tribal language and, if possible, learn as many words and phrases as possible. Make a list of sound difficulties and have children help with these.

Values: The teacher must respect the differences in values and study why there are conflicts between cultural value systems.[5]

The social structure or organization within the tribe is an intricate and dynamic force. The concerned and sensitive teacher will spend much time and effort in seeking as much knowledge as he can about the social organization. Without an awareness of what determines certain actions and behavior, it is likely there will be little real understanding of the individual and how his attitudes reflect his position in the social structure of the community.

A basic responsibility of each teacher is to understand the main differences between cultures and this implies traditional as well as current concepts of the culture. For an understanding of basic cultural differences we can use Roessel's work to define cultural concepts in general, remembering there are exceptions in each case and many more could be listed.

INDIAN WAY OF LIFE	NON-INDIAN WAY OF LIFE
1. Present orientated	1. Future orientated
2. Lack of time consciousness	2. Time consciousness
3. Giving	3. Saving
4. Respect for age	4. Emphasis on youth
5. Cooperation	5. Competition
6. Harmony with nature	6. Conquest over nature[7]

In relation to "lack of time consciousness" it should be pointed out that taken literally one might imagine that time has no significance. This is certainly not the case.

Time consciousness is related to the larger world of action rather than a clock. It is action oriented rather than mechanical and action oriented as opposed to strict time situations. It is a functional essence and not a lock-step minute to hour to day directive.

To help understand the Indian child, the teacher should know that the child is influenced by varying degrees of feeling about the so called "Indian way". There are at least three distinct groups within most Indian tribes who expound their philosophy as the way and direction for the future of the Indian. These groups can be identified as the Traditionalists, Moderates, and Progressives. At the risk of oversimplification, they can be described as:

> The traditionalists are also sometimes called the conservatives. Normally, this group holds to the old way and its religion. They also feel most of the problems of today are a result of abandoning the old way.
>
> The moderates, on the other hand, see good and are proud of the old way but see good in the new way of taking what is best from the dominant culture. Often the supporters of this philosophy are non-verbal whereas the proponents of the traditional's and progressive's point of view are very vocal.
>
> The progressives would solve all the problems of the Indian by throwing away the old way and accepting the dominant culture in total. This group says the culture has to be dropped and forgotten and only if this is done will the Indian progress. The Indian child is forced to choose from these options as a matter of daily social intercourse.

There are a multitude of traits which make the Indian child different from his white counterpart and this paper has touched only a few and very superficially at that. The good teacher sincerely concerned with understanding the Indian child must become a student of the Indian life style and constantly and consistently work at knowing more and more about the native American. It is not essential the teacher know about all the tribes which exist in the United States and Canada, but he should be familiar with the one he is involved with and those tribes closely related.

THE INDIVIDUAL

Designing the curriculum for the individual has been substantiated through numerous expressions of thought, word, and deed. It serves this study to cite others as an expression of support for the entire idea of individualization.

In his study of the individualized elementary school, Millis has stated that;

> "Man is a product of his heredity and his environment. Because of hereditary factors transmitted through the genes, each man is more like his fellow men than he is like any other man. There are differences which are determined at the moment of conception, differences which are then molded, shaped, and accentuated by the environment. These are differences for which we should be thankful. Certainly one of the characteristics that make man man is his infinite tendency toward variety. Not only are there differences in color, in body build, in visual acuity, and other physical features, all of which when added together really add up to very little, but there are also differrences in the ability to think thoughts and react differently in similar situations . . . .
>
> "It is really these differences we should be concerned with as teachers even though we often try to act as though they did not exist. Aside from their common humanness, about the only thing two children born on the same day at the same time have in common is their birthdate. Nevertheless, we group pupils in school on the basis of their chronological age and then attempt to treat them as though they were alike in all other aspects as well."9

Another observation of individual differences is made by Veda Stone in a paper, "The Indian Child in the Classroom", where she states;

> "The first responsibility of the school is to each student as an individual, helping him to develop himself as freely and creatively as possible. This pre-supposes that we are able to see and assess each pupil correctly, so that we begin where he is and help him to develop to his fullest . . . .

> "Not only must the teacher have the ability to observe or really "see" the child but he must have something else of equal importance: he must have a kind of attitude toward children that allows a certain climate to develop in the classroom--a climate of acceptance and respect--yes, let's say it, a climate of love . . . .
>
> "Therefore, to meet the needs of the child in the classroom, the teacher must of necessity go beyond the walls of the school. He must view and understand the setting out of which the child appears each day (or fails to appear). He must know the parents, the community environment which helped to shape this child in all his positive and negatives, the culture which marked him as different from Johnny who sits in the seat ahead of him or Mary, across the aisle."[10]

These statements substantiate the basic concept of individual differences and gives credence to the need for an increasing cognizance of educational programs designed for the individual.

Design of innovative curricula for an individualized program of instruction for the Indian child is a high priority concern. Exploring ideas and practices which have been used by schools involved in providing meaningful educational experiences for Indian children, and possibilities in curriculum construction drafted by others who share a mutual concern for the Indian learner must also be a high priority.

THE INVOLVEMENT

A framework of understanding must be developed which insures participation in the building of curriculum by parent, tribal leaders, Indian and Anglo educators and curriculum designers.

One suggestion for effecting this objective would be to extract participation within the school community based on a theme of doing something for the educational system through Indian leadership without being dominated by non-Indian concepts and directives.

Involvement is essential! Individual participation can be enhanced by suggesting that individuals serve on study committees which will investigate that which seems to be essential and that which might be modified. Such committees would have the authority to recommend specific areas for change and also suggest methods of instruction which might be tried in presenting the changed curriculum.

"Probably no other aspect of the school program is more important or can be more far reaching than developing the means for the active involvement of Indian parents in the education program."[11]

Involvement should be based on mutual consideration of ideas and concerns. The teacher who genuinely and sincerely becomes acquainted with parents of his students makes a positive step forward in becoming known as a person who takes a personal interest in all aspects of the child's life as well as becoming a friend of the entire family.

An initial meeting with parents concerning a discipline matter with their child hardly sets the rapport which is so necessary to solving problems mutually.

Returning to involvement in curriculum matters it would seem there should be no fear that basic subject matter will be discarded by the committees dealing with the curriculum. However, it would come as no surprise if extremely different methods of teaching basic subject areas were recommended, and further, that elective areas be expanded to include cultural reflection.

The involvement of Indian people in designing some of the materials as well as having a strong voice in the methods and techniques of how the subject matter may be better presented should have a profound effect on the Indian learner. The fact that the learner's own people were instrumental in the determination of what is to be learned and how it is taught should give positive reinforcement that is has merit from his cultural point of view.

The curriculum study groups composed of Indian students, parents, educators and other interested participants working with curriculum specialists must have cognizance of state department of education regulations as pertains to the curriculum requirements, but also with an eye to innovation and experimentation which, in most cases, is allowable.

The recommendations and implementation of curriculum changes determined by curriculum committees would hopefully stand the test of individual interest and participation with the results increased measurable

learning, understanding and application. And an anticipated ultimate goal, through higher level of interest and participation, would be a subsequently reduced dropout rate of students, and a greater likelihood of success and contentment in the students' future living pattern and life style.

THE PROGRAM

The individualized educational program consists of many parts and practices. What works for one teacher may not work for another and the variables are endless. However, before we take a look at the components a basic philosophy should be stated.

This philosophy must be consistent in meaning and action and must be a daily guide for students, teacher and parents.

The Philosophy

We believe that children are individuals and deserve to be treated as such.

We believe that the educational experience of the child be an individualized-humanized educational experience based on the recognition and acceptance of value differences.

We believe that there should be an individualized program of instruction that is based on continuous pupil progress, a non-graded school organization which is accomplished by flexible grouping, and an evaluation system of pupil progress designed to reinforce the positive accomplishments at all levels and areas of endeavor.

We believe the entire community has a role in the design and implementation of the educational expectations.

To facilitate greater insight relative to the basic construction of the philosophy, a definition of terms may be helpful.

Definitions

Values: Things and actions we prefer over other things and actions.

This is the way Dr. Bryde explains the concept of values to Sioux

children and it seems entirely acceptable for the purposes of this paper.

Continuous Progress Education: The process whereby each child can work at his level for each subject and progress as an individual without being pressured by the structure of the traditional graded elementary school. There are no grade level designations as known traditionally, but rather levels within an educational year of a nine to ten month period of attendance.

Evaluation: A system of indicating the learner's ability to accomplish certain requirements based on a simple "complete-in-complete" notation. The system is to facilitate learning and eradicate the failure syndrome.

According to Lewis:

> "A program which provides for individualization of instruction is not truly a non-graded program, unless humanism is an intergral part of the program. What is humanism? In education, it means seeing and treating students as individuals, each with a different personality, needs, interests, and abilities. It means recognizing the common humanity of all people. It means that children in a classroom go home with a feeling of success each day. It means an educational process in which human beings, the teachers and students, learn from each other. It means a school atmosphere which is warm and supportive so that students feel wanted, respected, and liked. It means acceptance and caring about student's human qualities. In essence, humanism in education means being a teacher who is sensitively alive."[13]

The individualized program based on continuous progress would seem to have positive factors that really do meet very real "special needs" of Indian children. Teachers must remember that a child at age 12 may be able to handle social concepts of the traditional grade level 10 and at the same time may not be able to read at the traditional grade level 4. He may be able to work grade level 8 mathematics and not be able to spell

grade 4 vocabulary as traditionally taught. Thus the child has individual differences educators are obligated to recognize, accept and do something about if educators really believe in treating the child as a distinct individual. His interests, aspirations, background, ability and attitudes determine his flow within the program, and consistent with this is the type of daily program educators are able to design for him which will motivate and stir his curiosity to tackle the daily challenges.

The continuous progress program has a great many proponents among educators. The Ten Year Plan for Indian Education (Stout) has suggested:

> "The basic feature for teaching Indian children in a continuous progress setting is that it does away with the cramping rigidity of formal grade groupings where those who might forge ahead are held back waiting for slower ones and where the slower ones are discouraged by their inability to 'catch up'."[14]

The curriculum content for Indian children must concern itself with Indian culture, history, traditions, philosophy and language, as well as the traditional studies in mathematics and science.[15]

Education must have materials that reinforce that which teachers say is important and further reinforce them by making the materials available to each child and not merely as supplemental material.

It would seem teachers must teach not only heritage concepts and customs, but also current tribal government, social concerns and reservation geography, economics, and bi-cultural realities generally.

Unfortunately, there is not a profusion of relevant materials available

but slowly and surely they are coming into being most of which have been conceived and brought to life by necessity.

The Sioux and Assiniboine at Fort Peck Reservation in Montana might include a great many local phenomena in their elementary science, earth and physical sciene and biology for the secondary school.

Unit study of the local birds and animals by field trips through the bottom land of the Missouri River as well as adjacent praire land would certainly develop interest and participation with all sharing each others knowledge. How intensified this unit study becomes is up to the group of students, as individuals and the teachers. The teaching in this setting may well be taught as a team utilizing local men who are expert in their knowledge of local birds and animals and the regular teacher working as a planner and organizer of supplemental materials and needs. Aspects of the unit would touch on the reproduction, migration, foods, natural enemies, etc. The child participating in this experience would be allowed and encouraged to continue into this as far as his curiosity carries him and where possible transfer to other subject areas.

A unit for physical education may cover such areas as native games, construction of game objects, trail hikes, and nature walks conducted by elders, animal trail identification and study of physical skills involved in trapping, hunting, and preparing of skins, (there is a great opportunity offered here for inter-disciplinary activity by combining biology, math, physical education, history, geography), native dances and native customs involving athletic skills, riding (horsemanship) skills and related areas of interest.

The list of possibilities are endless as one can visualize. However, the design and implementation must be developed cooperatively with parents, students, teachers, and administrators. The sky is the limit and imagination is the key to involvement. Each school will develop their own plan and no two would be alike, but certainly may share ideas and construct.

Examples of materials being designed for use in education of Indian students are: The Acculturation Psychology, or How to Be a Modern Indian, written by Dr. John Bryde for use on the Sioux reservations but which would certainly have applicable inferences for other tribes. The Navaho Curriculum Center of the Rough Rock Demonstration School has published several books dealing with Navaho culture and life to be used by the elementary and intermediate classes. In Billings, Montana, the Montana Reading Publications have developed the Indian Cultural Series which deal with stories of American Indians, past and present. These short stories, written primarily for and by the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, but which can be used by other tribes, have concerned themselves with vocabulary level and interest level as well as the historical significance and heritage emphasis. At the Rocky Boy Reservation a team of Indian educators and elders are designing and publishing curriculum materials in Native Cree for their bi-lingual program and general use. One of the unique efforts is the publishing of a Cree dictionary with accompanying illustrations.

Because books and other materials are limited, it would seem imperative to charge the development of many materials to the local school system who

in turn would work with institutions of higher learning having expertise in curriculum matters. The funding for such effort could come from a number of sources including the local school district and various government agencies.

Each school should attempt the incorporation of techniques for teaching that can involve the Indian parent and elders wherever possible. The Indian person who can be a member of a teaching team may hopefully increase the interest and participation of the students. The curriculum should have openness in design to utilize topography, climate, economy, and natural resources of the community.

A model curriculum will use flexible scheduling for maximum use of time by students and teachers. The curriculum must develop and support the bi-cultural contribution to the child's life, and the classroom must provide further support for the child to help insure that he grows up with a sense of well being, a positive self-image, and pride in his heritage and awareness of bi-cultural realities.

Each school will develop its own special techniques to make learning more meaningful and interesting in such a way that the learner pursues a sequence of inquiry to more difficult concepts and material.

The daily program must reflect happiness and partnership in the business of learning. There must be an air of cheerfulness in the school which permeates the relationship between individual child and staff. The total curriculum must reflect a commitment to helping the Indian learner learn and in such a way that he wants to get to school early each day and

is not anxious to leave in the afternoon. This can be done! And, the way it can be done is to truly individualize the instruction and utilize Indian people in developing the curriculum. The main obstacle to the implementation is in beginning. Once the staff is committed to trying, there will be no end to the excitement and results.

A rationale for attempting the individualization of instruction could have no better support than an evaluation of questionable past achievement in providing a meaningful educational system for our Indian boys and girls through the traditional graded schools.

FOOTNOTES

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